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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. Anti-Semitism

Key stories in the media:

Leading media quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying Sunday, at a news conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh, that he will meet PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas to urge resumption of negotiations on the road map. Olmert was quoted as saying he would insist that the PA carry out its commitments, including the dismantling of terrorist groups. Major media quoted Mubarak as saying that negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are the way to peace, but that if no such talks are possible, "we will find other solutions." Major media reported that the GOI was satisfied with the fact that during Olmert's visit, Mubarak did not rule out in principle his "realignment" plan. Israel Radio said that Mubarak did not explicitly state an acceptance of the plan. Leading media quoted Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit as saying that at this stage Egypt is opposed to any unilateral Israeli move.

Leading media reported that disagreements emerged in Sunday's cabinet meeting between Defense Minister Amir Peretz and Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter over the appropriate response Israel should adopt over the launching of Qassam rockets from the Gaza Strip against targets inside Israel. Dichter said that the IDF should escalate its operations, and, if necessary, occupy parts of the Gaza Strip. Dichter added that if Qassam rocket launchings could not be stopped, the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanun should be turned into a "ghost town." Peretz said that the reoccupation of parts of the Gaza Strip and pointed to the fact that the IDF had successfully confronted the threats posed along the Gaza frontier for some time, and that new ways of applying forces were being used. Maariv quoted Olmert as saying that the GOI does not act in such an extreme fashion. This morning, Israel Radio reported that Muhammad Sadi, a senior Hamas military leader, was assassinated in a bombing. The radio cited the IDF's denial that it was behind the operation.

Leading media (lead story in Ha'aretz) quoted Yasser Abed Rabbo, who represents Abbas at the national dialogue forum between the Palestinian factions that the deadline for accepting the ultimatum posed to Hamas by Abbas regarding the National Reconciliation Document ends tonight at midnight and will not be extended. The document calls for a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. This morning, Israel Radio reported that Abbas dispatched former Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei to Damascus in a last attempt to reach a compromise with Hamas on the issue of the "prisoners' document."

Israel Radio and other media reported that on Sunday, a Hamas militant and four Palestinian civilians were killed in the Gaza Strip in Fatah-Hamas clashes. On Sunday, leading media reported that on Saturday, some 2,500 Fatah militants, members of a new security force, deployed in Jenin as part of the escalating struggle with Hamas. Maariv cited assessments made at Sunday's cabinet meeting by Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin and Brig. Gen. Yosef Kuperwasser, the head of Military Intelligence's Research Division, that Abbas's status in the PA has strengthened and that Hamas is weakening.

Maariv wrote that the basic assumption of the IDF's five-year plan, which is due to be approved next month, is that Israel is at the cusp of a sharp confrontation with the Palestinians.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that the IAF has recently expressed interest in procuring a new squadron of F-15I fighter jets from Boeing with enhanced long-distance capabilities.

Outgoing National Security Council chief Giora Eiland was quoted as saying in an interview published by Ha'aretz on Sunday that he considers the disengagement from the Gaza Strip as a "missed opportunity of historic proportions" that was marred by faulty planning. Eiland also spoke against a unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank, saying that it would lead to a "radical state, not satisfied and not viable, and a situation of "continuous instability." Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday, MK Ran Cohen (Meretz) and MK Avraham Ravitz (United Torah Judaism) demanded that MK Tzachi Hanegbi, the Chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, schedule a special session to discuss Eiland's views.

Over the weekend, all media reported that in an incident early Friday in the southern Negev, IDF troops killed two Egyptian policemen who had crossed the border and opened fire at them. A third policeman escaped back to Egypt. On Sunday, Yediot quoted an Israeli security official as saying that the Egyptian policemen had crossed the border with the purpose of carrying out an action "like the Ras Burka massacre," a reference to the 1985 Sinai massacre of vacationing Israelis by an Egyptian police officer. Maariv reported that Olmert opened the Sharm el-Sheikh press conference by offering Israel's apology for the incident.

The Jerusalem Post printed a picture of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Israeli Consul-General Arye Mekel, and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, leading the Salute to Israel Parade along Manhattan's Fifth Avenue on Sunday.

All media quoted Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as saying Sunday that the flow of energy in the Middle East might be disrupted should the US make a "wrong move" over Iran.

Chinese Ambassador to Israel Chen Yonglong was quoted as saying Sunday in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that the decision to send PA FM Mahmoud Zahar to a Sino-Arab forum in Beijing last week was made by Abbas. The newspaper wrote that Yonlong was thus downplaying the significance of that controversial visit.

Ha'aretz reported that Dov Weisglass's four-year stint as the PM's senior adviser and envoy and came to an end during the weekend, as he assumed his role as chairman of the board of the major Israeli telecommunications company Bezeq.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that in an interview, Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-NJ), sharply criticized Saudi Arabia in the wake of a Tuesday report in The Post regarding that country's ongoing enforcement of an anti-Israel embargo. Ferguson was quoted as saying that he plans to raise the issue

Ha'aretz reported that the Foreign Ministry is trying to stop a UN initiative to invite Israeli politicians and public figures to the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, scheduled to be held in Moscow on June 8 and 9. The newspaper cited the belief of officials in the Foreign Ministry's International Organizations office, which is headed by Roni Ya'ar, that the invitation is intended to lend the appearance of respectability to an anti-Israeli forum.

Leading media reported that on Sunday, the Knesset's Finance Committee approved the 2006 state budget. Nine Knesset members voted in favor, six were against -- including Shelly Yechimovich (Labor) -- and two abstained.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Yohannes Lemma, the director of the African Refugees Development Center, a local NGO helping African refugees, told the newspaper Sunday that the GOI has ordered 75 Liberian asylum-seekers to leave Israel by March 31, 2007.

The Jerusalem Post reported that FM Tzipi Livni named veteran diplomat Ido Aharoni as her media adviser Sunday, replacing personal spokesman Shai Ben-Mor.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported on the popularity of Israeli psychologist Dr. Tal Ben Shahar, who lectures to a "staggering one fifth of the student body at Harvard University." Other media previously ran features of Ben Shahar.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that four Israelis were killed in a light aircraft crash in New Jersey last Wednesday, and that the American authorities are investigating the accident.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior op-ed writer Akiya Eldar commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "'If our older brother [America] was truly a strategic asset, he would have gotten us out of [the territories] long ago.'

Veteran print and TV journalist Ya'acov Ahimeir wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Olmert's appearance before the joint session of Congress ... was not aimed at responding to the boycott attacks against Israel."

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in Hatzofe's page-one editorial: "Egypt is involved in everything that can hurt Israel's interests."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Europeans may be entertaining much-belated second-thoughts about the Palestinians -- and in a big way."

Block Quotes:

I. "Is America a Strategic Liability?"

Senior op-ed writer Akiya Eldar commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/5): "When Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, 'the architect of the Oslo agreement,' was asked why he was supporting the policy of Ariel Sharon, he shrugged his shoulders and responded: 'How can I object to a policy that the president of the United States supports?' That 'policy' of 'there's no partner for peace' is what gave rise to the unilateralism that continues to chip away at what is left of the pragmatic Palestinian camp and to continue to reduce the chances of ending the occupation. Sunday was the 39th anniversary of that strategic burden. If our older brother was truly a strategic asset, he would have gotten us out of there long ago."

II. "Ahmadinejad's Troops in Academia"

Veteran print and TV journalist Ya'acov Ahimeir wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (5/5): "While the Iranian president calls almost daily for Israel's destruction, a snowball of boycotting Israel is gathering momentum: It is quietly rolling along, without receiving a proper political and rhetorical response from the attacked party. Once, many years ago, things were different: Israel had great advocates, whose voice reverberated, in complete contrast to the sound of silence that the Foreign Ministry emits today, with no response -- even rhetorical, if not political-being provided to the offensive aimed against the state.... After all, Olmert's appearance before the joint session of Congress in Washington, no matter how successful it was in representing the government's position, was a one-time affair, and was not aimed at responding to the boycott attacks against Israel, but rather appeasing the legislators on Capitol Hill.... The enemy is rallying its troops and has even opened fire -- and for whom and for what are the besieged forces waiting? How long will Israel's rhetorical silence continue? Will all the denunciations remain in the studios here, and their voice be heard only in central Israel? That's it, is there no one who will speak to the world on behalf of the majority of the people? We are being

drenched, and in these summer days it is not by raindrops."

III. "Misguided Courtship"

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in Hatzofe's page-one editorial (5/5): "On Sunday Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm el-Sheikh. This was another trip by an Israeli prime minister and senior political figure to meet with the Egyptian president on his home ground, again capitulating to Mubarak's insistence not to step on Israeli soil.... Hosni Mubarak, directly and indirectly, is behind the growing campaign to pressure Israel to give up its nuclear arms.... In talks with the Americans, Mubarak explained that he must maintain a controlled relationship with Israel in order not to give propaganda advantages to his adversaries at home. This story would have deserved serious attention, had we not already known that Egypt is involved in everything that can hurt Israel's interests. Under cover of peace, it has established an excellent western-type army, and we should ask openly at least once: Against whom is it directed."

IV. "Europe's Opening Mind"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (5/5): "Europeans may be entertaining much-belated second-thoughts about the Palestinians -- and in a big way.... It is clearly much too premature to celebrate the end of Palestinian supremacy in the fight for European hearts and minds, but what confers particular credence on [American pollster Stanley] Greenberg's findings is both what they show and what they don't. Greenberg does not report a remarkable rise in sympathy towards Israel. He does report a dramatic fall in sympathy for the Palestinians. What is striking about this shift is that it is occurring despite the fact that much of the European media remain skewed against Israel.... Israel would be foolish to pessimistically downplay what should be seen as a new opportunity. If it was a mistake to opt for defeat by default in Europe before Greenberg's survey findings, assuming a reflexive European receptivity to the anti-Israel messages of Arab and Moslem propagandists, it would be all the more unpardonable now."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It is not so much that Ahmadinejad is no Hitler -- it's more that Bush is no Churchill."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "strange though it may sound, Iran of all places could be the first candidate in the Middle East for a real, pro-American democracy after Israel."

Block Quotes:

1I. "It Pays to be a Bully"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/4): "Ahmadinejad is a violent bully, and the world is scared of bullies with nuclear programs. Ahmadinejad's regime emerges from this conflict courted, strengthened and superpower-like. As expected, Tehran has officially rejected (for the time being; they are waiting for the offer to be sweetened) the American conditions for dialogue, but they received with satisfaction the proposal to hold talks and the generous package of incentives.... Officials in Jerusalem swallowed the insult and were taciturn; the Israeli government willingly has ignored the chilling significance of the United States' reconciling with Ahmadinejad. Is the US administration and, in its wake, the entire cultured world, already slipping down the slippery slope? Are we facing once again the

illusion of 'peace in our time'? Bush might come to his senses and stop in mid-course but, the way it looks ... it is not so much that Ahmadinejad is no Hitler -- it's more that Bush is no Churchill."

II. "From an Enemy to a Lover"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot (5/4): "Iran is liable to agree to [the] package of [US] proposals, but this is where its commitment will have to be made: to abandon the axis of evil and its support of Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and to remain uninvolved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in keeping with the policy set by Iran's former president, Mohammed Khatami. Iran, under Khatami, said that it would accept any agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. An Iranian withdrawal from its support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad will greatly reduce the volume of terrorism in our region, stabilize Israel's borders, and facilitate reaching Israeli-Palestinian arrangements. If that, indeed, is how matters develop, the process will culminate with full diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran and an exchange of ambassadors. Both countries have a lot to be gained from accepting the proposed plan.... Iran is not operating from a position of power, but from a position of weakness and a sense of major panic. Intelligent American statesmanship might yet turn today's enemy into tomorrow's ally and, strange though it may sound, Iran of all places could be the first candidate in the Middle East for a real, pro-American democracy after Israel."

13. Anti-Semitism:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The Jewish people have not always been able to count on a friend in the form of a strong US administration. At a time when such a government has appointed someone to emphasize its commitment to the Jewish people, it is only right to offer our blessings and our thanks."

Block Quotes:

"Against All Anti-Semitism"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (5/5): "A law passed by the US Congress some two years ago led to the appointment about 10 days ago of a special State Department envoy for monitoring and combating anti-Semitism. The envoy's job will be to persuade decision-makers to keep the war against anti-Semitism high up on the US agenda with respect to its relations with other countries, and to ensure that the sharp teeth of American foreign policy are used in this battle. The Bush administration has proved repeatedly that it will not stand idly by in the face of anti-Semitic statements and actions. At the swearing-in ceremony for the first envoy, Gregg Rickman, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that 'anti-Semitism is not just a historical fact. It is a current event'.... US State Department officials are not thrilled about the appointment that was forced upon them by the legislature. In this case, however, it appears that the collective wisdom of the lawmakers has exceeded that of the State Department, most of whose objections were for bureaucratic reasons.... The Jewish people have not always been able to count on a friend in the form of a strong US administration. At a time when such a government has appointed someone to emphasize its commitment to the Jewish people, it is only right to offer our blessings and our thanks."

JONES